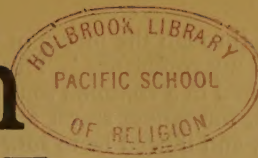


The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
J. H. OLDHAM



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DEAR MEMBER,

Voices from our fellow-Christians in countries suffering from German occupation are very welcome. Two recent utterances by leaders of Churches on the continent are deserving of attention. One is from Holland in an article in a religious magazine by a distinguished leader of the Dutch Reformed Church who writes :—

“ In and through the events of our time God has begun a serious conversation with the world, with our people, and especially with the Churches, including our own Church. The Churches must answer that initiative of God. They are in a difficult position. The time in which they would live without interference or without opposition is passed. They must fight for their place and their existence. In many cases they are no more than underground Churches, or Churches under the Cross. It is humanly impossible to give an adequate idea of all the spiritual and physical suffering which that statement implies. Nor is it possible to formulate by what mysteries of victorious and divine joy this suffering is again and again transformed.

“ But this is not the most important aspect of our situation. Even more important is the fact that through God’s speaking to the world and the Churches, the Churches are called to give an account of their past and their present. If the Churches would make the attempt—the danger is not an imaginary but a very real one—to live on with as little interference and as quietly as possible, or to consider their own safety as the greatest good, they would show that they are deaf to the divine call. From a fundamentally Christian standpoint one cannot think of anything more disastrous than that a Church should emerge from this present period without having been changed. One cannot imagine what other means, even more drastic than the present ones, God would have to use in order to awaken the Churches and their members out of the slumber of self-sufficiency and introversion. The de-Christianization of the Western world, the results and the true character of which are only now becoming manifest, is not only due to the turning of the world from God but equally to the turning of the Church from its true calling. That insight must terrify, and so heal, the Churches. The call to order which comes to them is then simply this : ‘ Wake up and realize your calling, which is your very *raison d’être* and enter into judgment with yourselves, so that you may receive new life ’.”

The other quotation is from an address by Bishop Berggrav of Norway to the Oslo Law Association, in which he says :—

“ When truth becomes holy for us, it creates martyrs. Only when a task becomes holy for a man, does it become a power in him which makes him capable of achieving the greatest deeds. The same is true of what we call society. It cannot rest only on the basis of rational factors. If the deep, mysterious respect, the holy inner obligation were taken away, all that would remain would be millions of legal paragraphs which bring forth millions of executive clauses, and yet society would fall to pieces. The Church submits itself to the law ; she does not have to determine it. But note that to submit to the law does not mean submitting to any apparent legal order ; for above all law and all power stands God, as He speaks through His Word in our conscience. The Church does not create law, but the conscience does. The awakened conscience which is aware of law is therefore the place where a deeply human encounter takes place between law and religion. Here law and religion both experience their most serious conflicts, but also the defeats which turn into victories. When Thomas More, the Chancellor of Henry VIII, came into conflict with the king because he would not carry out the king’s will against his holy convictions, he was thrown into prison against all law. In his cell, he wrote to his daughter these words : ‘ It strengthens and comforts me to think that in all my deadly anguish

I have through the mercy of God never harboured the thought of agreeing to a thing which is against my conscience.' This is a dramatic example of this encounter of law and religion, which are united in a common source : in the absolute obligation from which there is no possibility of appeal, but whose secret and immediate call makes man free to live for truth, goodness, and justice, and if need be to suffer too."

THE UNIVERSAL CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

The reality of the world-wide Christian fellowship is illustrated by the international relief provided for the overseas work of Christian Churches which has been interrupted by the war. The missionary work of the Churches in Germany, Finland, Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium, France, and Switzerland has been seriously dislocated. German missionaries, who minister in their various mission fields to a Christian community numbering a million and a half, have in many instances been interned, and in all the other countries named the sending of supplies has been cut off. In spite of this the missionaries have remained bravely at work. They have been willing to endure hardship and to sacrifice comfort. Cut off from any visible means of support and from communication with their known friends, they have shown a remarkable faith and courage. The Churches of other countries have combined to assist the Christian communities and missions which have suffered. Funds have been collected and financial support has been given to well over a hundred missions which have been separated from their parent Churches in Europe. There has been no discrimination on national or credal grounds. American help has been particularly generous. The United States have contributed more than half a million dollars to assist the missions of the continental Churches, and nearly half a million dollars to aid the missions of British Churches which have suffered through the war. In spite of their own difficulties the Churches in Great Britain have contributed several thousand pounds to the aid of Continental missions, as well as much help through the loan of personnel. Contributions have also been made by the Churches in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, and generous local help has been given in India, China, the Congo and other fields. In spite of all that has been done, the problem of maintaining the overseas work of the Churches under war conditions remains very serious.

The triennial Conference of the Episcopal Church of the United States of America sent an invitation by cable for someone from Great Britain to come over to consult about the work of the Church of England overseas, and Bishop Hudson, the Secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, visited America at the close of last year. After hearing his statement the Convention resolved to include in its budget the sum of \$300,000 as a gift to Anglican missionary societies. A similar readiness to help was shown by the Anglican Church in Canada. The Church of England has made annual grants amounting to \$60,000 for the extension and pioneer work of the Church in Canada. The Canadian Church has resolved to relinquish these grants and has pledged itself to raise within its own borders every cent of necessary money which has been received from England.

JAPANESE AND AMERICAN CHURCH LEADERS IN CONFERENCE

Reference has been made more than once in the News-Letter to the movement in Japan, under the influence of the growing national spirit, for the amalgamation of the Protestant Christian bodies in a united Church of Christ in Japan. A delegation of Japanese Christians visited America a few weeks ago to confer with representatives of the American Churches carrying on missionary work in Japan. The Japanese delegation numbered nine and included Bishop Abe, Dr. Kagawa, Mr. Kozaki, pastor of the leading Congregational Church of Tokyo, Miss Michi Kawai, the Honourable T. Matsuyama, a member of Parliament, Mr. Saito, the General Secretary of the National Council of the Y.M.C.A., and Dr. Yuasa, formerly President of Doshisha University. The purpose of the visit was to strengthen the bonds of Christian fellowship between the churches of the two countries, to discuss the relation of the American Churches to the newly organized Church of Christ in Japan, and to explain the attitude of Japanese Christians toward the

ceremonies held in the Japanese State Shinto shrines. The Japanese were met in conference by seventeen leaders of the Churches of the United States. At a time of growing tension between Japan and the United States they were able to meet for worship together and to discuss with the utmost frankness some of the misunderstandings between the Christians of the two countries and to achieve from the start an unbroken fellowship and mutual trust which those who took part in the conference found amazing. It was explained by the Japanese that, while both inner and external influences contributed to the formation of the new united Church of Christ in Japan, the union was brought about by the free decision of the Japanese Christians themselves and not by any compulsion exerted by the Government. The Old and New Testaments and the Apostles Creed were unanimously adopted by the united body as its standard of faith. The relation of foreign missionaries to the new Church has to be determined, but it is already clear that they will work under the direction of the Church. It was also made clear by the Japanese that they believe that there are still large opportunities for service by foreign missionaries along distinctive lines.

A TRAINED CHRISTIAN LAITY

There is no close parallel, so far as I know, in the Anglican or Free Churches to the Grail movement in the Roman Catholic church. The aim of the movement is to create a "lay apostolate" among women by training them to bear an effective witness to their faith both in speech and in action in the ordinary walks of life. The Grail came to England from Holland, where it was founded in 1929, and its value has already been proved. The movement is open to all Catholic girls over the age of 15 and the training they receive varies according to their capabilities and to the jobs that they are going to do in secular life. There are camps and training weekends for schoolgirls and for those who are already at work, there are local training weekends in various parishes, and there is a residential training course of three to six months at the Grail headquarters in London for those who want to become leaders in the movement, and refresher courses for them at regular intervals. The girls are required to study their own faith so as to be able to answer questions about it when challenged to do so, and they study social and economic conditions and the teaching of the Church on social problems. After her training every girl joins a team of service. If she belongs to the Child Welfare team she gives her free time to clinics, or to holiday camps for children and she is helped to study child psychology. If she belongs to the Press team, she reports cases of distortion of facts to headquarters. The contact team members give what help they can to, and learn all they can about, the social services. There are also several missionary teams which organize exhibitions, make medical and other supplies, lecture on missions in schools and make contacts with foreign students. In addition to the team work, and there are more teams than there is space in which to enumerate them, the Grail undertakes larger projects in which all the teams unite. These include the staging of religious pageants and plays in which several hundred Grail members may take part, and the launching of evangelistic campaigns. The Grail publishes a considerable amount of literature, including an excellent little paper for "Shelterers" called *A.M.*

ANOTHER "CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCHES"

Professor John Macmurray has given us a small volume, the significance of which is quite incommensurate with its size.¹ He has a way of seizing on what is of crucial importance and of making others see it. This is a service so great, that we must not complain if he remains apparently blind to questions which urgently need an answer. His thesis is that we have had in the past in this country two bulwarks against the extension of political control over the whole of human life, the dangers of which were pointed out in last week's Supplement. The two large areas of life which have hitherto been exempted in the main from direct political control have been religion and economic enterprise. The first has

¹ *Challenge to the Churches*. Kegan & Paul. 1s.

to do with the ends of life, and its exclusion, therefore, is a matter of principle ; the second with the means of life, and its exclusion a matter of expediency. What Mr. Macmurray is concerned to bring home to us is that the second of these bulwarks of freedom—the one which in practice has been most effective in safeguarding freedom as we have known it in the past—has gone, or certainly will go, and in Mr. Macmurray's view ought to go ; and that, consequently, the only power left to preserve freedom for those reaches of human life which cannot be subjected to political control without disaster, is religion. The reason for the disappearance of the bulwark of economic freedom is that socialism or a planned economy has become inevitable. Democracy has rested for the last three centuries on the power of Parliament, representing the people, to vote taxes ; control of the nation's wealth meant power to control the government and to dictate its policy. If you have a planned economy and the wealth of the nation is at the disposal of the government, the balance of power is shifted, and Parliament tends to become dependent on the government instead of the government on Parliament.

Without entering into debate about the relations of the economic and political spheres, we can agree that the necessity for regulating economic activity in modern society enormously enhances the power of state and brings great dangers to human freedom. Is religion by itself a sufficient defence against these dangers ? Mr. Macmurray holds that so long as the field of religion is excluded from the competence of political authority, everything is excluded which democracy requires ; and that religion could of itself enforce the limitation of political authority which democracy demands—indeed religion alone is capable in the long run of doing this. He hastens to add that religion in Europe, as we know it to-day, is quite incapable of this task.

The significance of Mr. Macmurray's contribution is that he sees with unusual clearness the fundamental importance of religion in relation to the problems of modern society ; and he is no less firmly convinced that the historic basis for creating a true community in the western world lies in Christianity, and only in Christianity. To have lodged this truth firmly in the mind is a work well done. But at this point Mr. Macmurray leaves us in the lurch. If the assertion that the only possible basis for a democratic society is Christianity, is to have a real meaning, we must know what Christianity is. Not only is Mr. Macmurray hazy about this, but it is very doubtful whether what he means by it is the same as historic Christianity. Nor does he face the crucial question whether Christianity has a *direct* contribution to make to the political problem of power. The secret of Christianity is the Cross. Christianity as religion is on a different plane from the political struggle with which Mr. Macmurray is concerned. The battle in that field has to be waged with political weapons. If Christianity is to contribute to the overthrow of Leviathan, it can only be by inspiring political convictions, which will in turn create political institutions of a contrary kind to the totalitarian state. If Mr. Macmurray fails to come to grips with these questions, we at least owe him a debt of gratitude for having stated one part of the problem with remarkable clarity and force.

Yours sincerely,

J. H. Oldham

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